

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 PM-04 DODE-00 SP-02 USIA-06 AID-05
NSC-05 EPG-02 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01
/075 W

-----072882 241034Z /23

P R 231510Z JUN 77
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6281
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, EGEN, PINT, PFOR, SF
SUBJECT: VORSTER SPEAKS TO TRADE UNIONS

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: IN A SPEECH BEFORE MORE THAN 400 TRADE UNIONISTS WHICH WAS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE LARGEST MEETINGS OF LABOR REPRESENTATIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER APPEALED FOR WAGE RESTRAINTS AND WORKER PATRIOTISM SAYING HIS COUNTRY WOULD NOT SUBMIT TO WHAT HE CALLED THE IMPOSSIBLE DEMANDS OF WORLD OPINION. END SUMMARY.

2. THE MEETING ON JUNE 22 IN PRETORIA BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER VORSTER AND WHAT WERE TO HAVE BEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL WHITE AND COLORED UNIONS WAS MARRED BY THE ABSENCE OF THE MULTI-RACIAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA (TUCSA). NO BLACK TRADE UNIONS WERE REPRESENTED. WHILE LEAVING AFFILIATES FREE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO ATTEND, PRESIDENT LIEF VAN TONDER REFUSED TO HAVE TUCSA OFFICIALLY REPRESENTED DUE TO UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING. SOME WHITE TRADE UNION LEADERS SUCH AS GERT BEETGE OF THE BUILDING WORKERS UNION ALSO WERE NOT PRESENT "BECAUSE WE COULD NOT OBTAIN AN ASSURANCE THAT ONLY WHITES

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WOULD ATTEND." THE MEETING WAS CHAIRED BY ATTIE NIEWOUDT, PRESIDENT OF THE ALL WHITE CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS. SOME WHITE AND COLORED AFFILIATES OF TUCSA DID PARTICIPATE ALONG WITH THE CONFEDERATION AND OTHER INDEPENDENT UNIONS.

3. VORSTER SAID: "THE WORLD DEMANDS CERTAIN CONCESSIONS AND ACTIONS WHICH WE SIMPLY CANNOT SUBMIT TO -- WHATEVER MAY HAPPEN

ALONG THE WAY AHEAD". HE ADDED THERE WERE FOUR GREAT DANGERS FACING SOUTH AFRICA: "THE FIRST IS THAT OUR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS PROBLEMS MUST BE SOLVED; SECOND, WE MUST TAKE CARE THAT WE DO NOT PRICE OURSELVES OUT OF THE WORLD MARKET; THIRD, SOUTH AFRICA CANT AFFORD TO SUBMIT TO THE IMPOSSIBLE DEMANDS OF SO-CALLED WORLD OPINION. THE WORLD DEMANDS OF US CERTAIN THINGS AND CERTAIN ACTIONS TO WHICH WE CANNOT AGREE, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS IN THE FUTURE. CERTAIN PEOPLE ARE PREPARED TO SUBMIT TO THOSE DEMANDS. AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, I AM NOT PREPARED TO DO IT."

"SUBMISSION WILL COST NOTHING IN TERMS OF MONEY. IT CAN BE DONE WITH A FEW STROKES OF A PEN, BUT THEN SOUTH AFRICA WILL BE THE MOST POPULAR CORPSE IN THE WORLD. I AM NOT PREPARED TO HAVE THAT ON MY CONSCIENCE."

"FOURTH, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT LAW AND ORDER MUST BE MAINTAINED AND OUR TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY PROTECTED AT ALL TIMES. THIS CALLS FOR A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY. NOTHING IS MORE EXPENSIVE TODAY THAN WAR AND WAR MATERIALS. OUR DEFENCE BUDGET IS ALREADY IN THE REGION OF R1,800-MILLION, BUT THIS IS THE RESULT OF THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE."

4. STRIKING UP THE STRATEGIC ARGUMENT VORSTER SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE "THAT THERE WOULD BE A NUCLEAR WAR. IF WAR WERE TO COME, IT WOULD BE A CONVENTIONAL ONE. FROM A STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW, THE COUNTRY WHICH CONTROLLED SOUTHERN AFRICA IN SUCH A CONVENTIONAL WAR WOULD BE IN AN EXTREMELY ADVANTAGEOUS POSITION.
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CONTROL OVER THE CAPE SEA ROUTE, FOR INSTANCE, WOULD ENABLE IT TO CUT OFF THE OIL SUPPLY TO AMERICA AND EUROPE AT WILL."

5. COMMENT: IN A CONVERSATION AT THE MEETING WITH THE REGIONAL LABOR OFFICER, MINISTER OF LABOR BOTHA SAID THE POOR TURN OUT WAS DUE TO INADEQUATE PREPARATION. "THE DECISION TO HOLD THIS MEETING WAS TAKEN ONLY 14 DAYS AGO." VORSTER IS OBVIOUSLY CONCERNED OVER GROWING DEMANDS FROM RANK AND FILE TRADE UNIONISTS FOR THE REMOVAL OF WAGE RESTRAINTS WHICH WOULD MAKE MORE DIFFICULT GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTS TO COPE WITH INFLATION AND BALANCE OF PAYMENTS DIFFICULTIES. THE ALL WHITE CONFEDERATION WHICH HAS ITS MEMBERSHIP PREDOMINANTLY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IS MORE PREPARED TO COOPEATE WITH VORSTER THAN SOME OF THE MORE MILITANT TUCSA UNIONS IN INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, SPEECHES, LABOR UNIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 23-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977JOHANN01623
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770226-0336
Format: TEL
From: JOHANNESBURG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770624/aaaaavcc.tel
Line Count: 109
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: e4f0ce77-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2051284
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VORSTER SPEAKS TO TRADE UNIONS
TAGS: ELAB, EGEN, PINT, PFOR, SF, (VORSTER, BALTHAZAR JOHANNES)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/e4f0ce77-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009